

Standard 5-2: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the continued westward expansion of the United States.

5-2.3 Summarize how railroads affected development of the West, including their ease and inexpensiveness for travelers and their impact on trade and the natural environment. (G, E, H)

Taxonomy Level: B 2 Understand /Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

In 3rd grade, students explained the effects of human systems on the physical landscape of South Carolina over time, including the relationship of population distribution and patterns of migration to natural resources, climate, agriculture, and economic development (3-1.4).

In United States history, students will explain the impact and challenges of westward movement, including the major land acquisitions, people's motivations for moving west, railroad construction, the displacement of Native Americans, and the its impact on the developing American character (USHC-3.1).

It is essential for students to know:

The transcontinental railroad impacted the development of the West by providing a means of travel, attracting new immigrant settlers and providing a means for transporting the agricultural products grown in the West to market.

Many settlers traveled by rail in order to settle in the West. Despite the inexpensiveness of railroad travel, some settlers from the East, such as poor farmers and immigrants, could not afford to travel by rail and continued to travel by covered wagon. The railroad also attracted new immigrants to the United States. As a result of the government's support for the building of the railroads, the railroad companies owned thousands of acres of land along their routes. In order to fund the laying of the track, the railroad sold much of this land to settlers. They even advertised this land in Europe and this helped attract new immigrants. Towns also developed along the routes.

The settlers who bought land in the West from the railroad or who received free land from the government hoped to make a profit from farming. The railroad fostered trade and economic growth by providing them a means of getting their crops to market. Cash crops, such as corn and wheat, became profitable as did the raising of cattle and hogs. The railroad transported these agricultural products to processing centers and helped major industries such as flour milling and meat processing develop in cities like Chicago.

As tracks crossed the plains and tunnels were dug through the mountains, railroads had an impact on the natural environment [5-6.2]. The coal burning engines required more and more fuel and this led to an increase in mining which impacted the environment. Because railroads brought goods to market, they fostered the development of industry which in turn impacted the environment. Smoke from the factories and wastes from the processing plants polluted the air and the water.

It is not essential for students to know:

It is not essential for students to know the names of the companies that developed to process the agricultural products of the West. They do not need to know any other cities in the West. Students do not need to know details of the pollution that was produced.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments require students to **summarize** how the railroad aided in the development of the West. Students should be able to **explain** the impact of the railroad on trade and the development of industries and cities.

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